

Assembly Bill No. 458

CHAPTER 331

An act to amend Sections 1522.41, 1529.2, and 1563 of the Health and Safety Code, and to amend Sections 16001.9 and 16003 of, and to add Section 16013 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to human services.

[Approved by Governor September 6, 2003. Filed
with Secretary of State September 8, 2003.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 458, Chu. Foster care.

Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services to license community care facilities, including facilities that provide foster care services for children. Existing law regulates foster family homes and provides for their licensure by certified foster family agencies, the county, or the State Department of Social Services.

Existing law provides that it is the policy of the state that foster children have specified rights.

Existing law requires an administrator of a group home facility to complete a certification program. Existing law requires licensing personnel at the department to have specified training. Existing law requires every licensed foster parent to complete specified preplacement training and additional annual training. Existing law requires that each community college district with a foster care education program make orientation and training available to a relative caretaker.

This bill would add to the rights contained in the policy referred to above, the rights of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status. This bill would require training for administrators, licensing personnel, licensed foster parents, and relative caretakers to include training about these rights.

This bill would also state that it is the policy of this state that all persons engaged in providing care and services to foster children are to have fair and equal access to all available programs, benefits, services, and licensing processes, and shall not be subjected to discrimination or harassment, as specified.

This bill would provide that this policy shall not be interpreted to create or modify existing preferences for foster placements, or to limit the local placement agency's ability to make placement decisions for the child based on the child's best interests.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Foster children are harmed by discrimination based on actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status, whether that discrimination is directed at them or at their caregivers.

(b) County child welfare departments in California receive federal, state, and county funds for the care, placement, and supervision of abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes for their own protection and who are dependents of the juvenile courts of the state.

(c) Group home facilities and foster family agencies are licensed by the State Department of Social Services, contract with county child welfare departments, receive federal, state, and county funds, and have paid professional staff engaged in providing care and services to foster children and training, supervision, and support to foster parents.

(d) County child welfare departments, group home facilities, and foster family agencies have a legal responsibility to provide care, placement, and services to foster children, family members, foster parents, and service providers without discriminating on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

(e) Foster family homes and relative caregivers are licensed by the State Department of Social Services and receive federal, state, and county funds for the care of children. Still, foster parents and relative caregivers are not paid employees, instead, they care for foster children in their own homes and are permitted under current practice to decide on an individual basis whether to accept and retain an individual child in their care.

(f) Once foster parents or relative caregivers accept a child into their home, they have a legal responsibility to provide care to the child without discriminating on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status. Because any change in living environment is traumatic for any



child, if the foster parents or relative caregivers cannot fulfill this responsibility with respect to an individual child, then foster parents and relative caregivers should notify the child's social worker and seek additional training, counseling, or other assistance. Only as a last resort should the foster parent or relative caregiver request that the child be removed from the foster parents' or relative caregivers' home.

(g) Initial and ongoing training for county child welfare workers, group home staff and administrators, foster family agency staff, foster parents, and relative caregivers is crucial to enable all persons involved in providing care, placement, and services to foster children to fulfill their responsibilities to provide safe and nondiscriminatory care, placement, and services to foster children.

SEC. 2. Section 1522.41 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1522.41. (a) The director, in consultation and collaboration with county placement officials, group home provider organizations, the Director of Mental Health, and the Director of Developmental Services, shall develop and establish a certification program to ensure that administrators of group home facilities have appropriate training to provide the care and services for which a license or certificate is issued.

(b) (1) In addition to any other requirements or qualifications required by the department, an administrator of a group home facility shall successfully complete a department approved certification program pursuant to subdivision (c) prior to employment. An administrator employed in a group home on the effective date of this section shall meet the requirements of paragraph (2) of subdivision (c).

(2) In those cases where the individual is both the licensee and the administrator of a facility, the individual shall comply with all of the licensee and administrator requirements of this section.

(3) Failure to comply with this section shall constitute cause for revocation of the license of the facility.

(4) The licensee shall notify the department within 10 days of any change in administrators.

(c) (1) The administrator certification programs shall require a minimum of 40 hours of classroom instruction that provides training on a uniform core of knowledge in each of the following areas:

(A) Laws, regulations, and policies and procedural standards that impact the operations of the type of facility for which the applicant will be an administrator.

(B) Business operations.

(C) Management and supervision of staff.

(D) Psychosocial and educational needs of the facility residents.

(E) Community and support services.



(F) Physical needs for facility residents.

(G) Administration, storage, misuse, and interaction of medication used by facility residents.

(H) Resident admission, retention, and assessment procedures, including the right of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

(I) Nonviolent emergency intervention and reporting requirements.

(2) The department shall adopt separate program requirements for initial certification for persons who are employed as group home administrators on the effective date of this section. A person employed as an administrator of a group home facility on the effective date of this section, shall obtain a certificate by completing the training and testing requirements imposed by the department within 12 months of the effective date of the regulations implementing this section. After the effective date of this section, these administrators shall meet the requirements imposed by the department on all other group home administrators for certificate renewal.

(3) Individuals applying for certification under this section shall successfully complete an approved certification program, pass a written test administered by the department within 60 days of completing the program, and submit to the department the documentation required by subdivision (d) within 30 days after being notified of having passed the test. The department may extend these time deadlines for good cause. The department shall notify the applicant of his or her test results within 30 days of administering the test.

(d) The department shall not begin the process of issuing a certificate until receipt of all of the following:

(1) A certificate of completion of the administrator training required pursuant to this chapter.

(2) The fee required for issuance of the certificate. A fee of one hundred dollars (\$100) shall be charged by the department to cover the costs of processing the application for certification.

(3) Documentation from the applicant that he or she has passed the written test.

(4) Submission of fingerprints pursuant to Section 1522. The department may waive the submission for those persons who have a current clearance on file.

(5) That person is at least 21 years of age.



(e) It shall be unlawful for any person not certified under this section to hold himself or herself out as a certified administrator of a group home facility. Any person willfully making any false representation as being a certified administrator or facility manager is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(f) (1) Certificates issued under this section shall be renewed every two years and renewal shall be conditional upon the certificate holder submitting documentation of completion of 40 classroom hours of continuing education related to the core of knowledge specified in subdivision (c). For purposes of this section, an individual who is a group home facility administrator and who is required to complete the continuing education hours required by the regulations of the Department of Developmental Services, and approved by the regional center, may have up to 24 of the required continuing education course hours credited toward the 40-hour continuing education requirement of this section. Community college course hours approved by the regional centers shall be accepted by the department for certification.

(2) Every administrator of a group home facility shall complete the continuing education requirements of this subdivision.

(3) Certificates issued under this section shall expire every two years on the anniversary date of the initial issuance of the certificate, except that any administrator receiving his or her initial certification on or after July 1, 1999, shall make an irrevocable election to have his or her recertification date for any subsequent recertification either on the date two years from the date of issuance of the certificate or on the individual's birthday during the second calendar year following certification. The department shall send a renewal notice to the certificate holder 90 days prior to the expiration date of the certificate. If the certificate is not renewed prior to its expiration date, reinstatement shall only be permitted after the certificate holder has paid a delinquency fee equal to three times the renewal fee and has provided evidence of completion of the continuing education required.

(4) To renew a certificate, the certificate holder shall, on or before the certificate expiration date, request renewal by submitting to the department documentation of completion of the required continuing education courses and pay the renewal fee of one hundred dollars (\$100), irrespective of receipt of the department's notification of the renewal. A renewal request postmarked on or before the expiration of the certificate shall be proof of compliance with this paragraph.

(5) A suspended or revoked certificate shall be subject to expiration as provided for in this section. If reinstatement of the certificate is approved by the department, the certificate holder, as a condition precedent to reinstatement, shall submit proof of compliance with paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (f), and shall pay a fee in an amount



equal to the renewal fee, plus the delinquency fee, if any, accrued at the time of its revocation or suspension. Delinquency fees, if any, accrued subsequent to the time of its revocation or suspension and prior to an order for reinstatement, shall be waived for a period of 12 months to allow the individual sufficient time to complete the required continuing education units and to submit the required documentation. Individuals whose certificates will expire within 90 days after the order for reinstatement may be granted a three-month extension to renew their certificates during which time the delinquency fees shall not accrue.

(6) A certificate that is not renewed within four years after its expiration shall not be renewed, restored, reissued, or reinstated except upon completion of a certification training program, passing any test that may be required of an applicant for a new certificate at that time, and paying the appropriate fees provided for in this section.

(7) A fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) shall be charged for the reissuance of a lost certificate.

(8) A certificate holder shall inform the department of his or her employment status and change of mailing address within 30 days of any change.

(g) Unless otherwise ordered by the department, the certificate shall be considered forfeited under either of the following conditions:

(1) The department has revoked any license held by the administrator after the department issued the certificate.

(2) The department has issued an exclusion order against the administrator pursuant to Section 1558, 1568.092, 1569.58, or 1596.8897, after the department issued the certificate, and the administrator did not appeal the exclusion order or, after the appeal, the department issued a decision and order that upheld the exclusion order.

(h) (1) The department, in consultation and collaboration with county placement officials, provider organizations, the State Department of Mental Health, and the State Department of Developmental Services, shall establish, by regulation, the program content, the testing instrument, the process for approving certification training programs, and criteria to be used in authorizing individuals, organizations, or educational institutions to conduct certification training programs and continuing education courses. The department may also grant continuing education hours for continuing courses offered by accredited educational institutions that are consistent with the requirements in this section. The department may deny vendor approval to any agency or person in any of the following circumstances:

(A) The applicant has not provided the department with evidence satisfactory to the department of the ability of the applicant to satisfy the



requirements of vendorization set out in the regulations adopted by the department pursuant to subdivision (j).

(B) The applicant person or agency has a conflict of interest in that the person or agency places its clients in group home facilities.

(C) The applicant public or private agency has a conflict of interest in that the agency is mandated to place clients in group homes and to pay directly for the services. The department may deny vendorization to this type of agency only as long as there are other vendor programs available to conduct the certification training programs and conduct education courses.

(2) The department may authorize vendors to conduct the administrator's certification training program pursuant to this section. The department shall conduct the written test pursuant to regulations adopted by the department.

(3) The department shall prepare and maintain an updated list of approved training vendors.

(4) The department may inspect certification training programs and continuing education courses to determine if content and teaching methods comply with regulations. If the department determines that any vendor is not complying with the requirements of this section, the department shall take appropriate action to bring the program into compliance, which may include removing the vendor from the approved list.

(5) The department shall establish reasonable procedures and timeframes not to exceed 30 days for the approval of vendor training programs.

(6) The department may charge a reasonable fee, not to exceed one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) every two years, to certification program vendors for review and approval of the initial 40-hour training program pursuant to subdivision (c). The department may also charge the vendor a fee, not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100) every two years, for the review and approval of the continuing education courses needed for recertification pursuant to this subdivision.

(i) The department shall establish a registry for holders of certificates that shall include, at a minimum, information on employment status and criminal record clearance.

(j) Subdivisions (b) to (i), inclusive, shall be implemented upon regulations being adopted by the department, by January 1, 2000.

SEC. 3. Section 1529.2 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1529.2. (a) In addition to the foster parent training provided pursuant to Section 903.7 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, foster



family agencies shall supplement the community college training by providing a program of training for their certified foster families.

(b) (1) Every licensed foster parent shall complete a minimum of 12 hours of foster parent training, as prescribed in paragraph (3), before the placement of any foster children with the foster parent. In addition, a foster parent shall complete a minimum of eight hours of foster parent training annually as prescribed in paragraph (4). No child shall be placed in a foster family home unless these requirements are met by the persons in the home who are serving as the foster parents.

(2) (A) Upon the request of the foster parent for a hardship waiver from the postplacement training requirement or a request for an extension of the deadline, the county may, at its option, on a case-by-case basis, waive the postplacement training requirement or extend any established deadline for a period not to exceed one year, if the postplacement training requirement presents a severe and unavoidable obstacle to continuing as a foster parent. Obstacles for which a county may grant a hardship waiver or extension are:

- (i) Lack of access to training due to the cost or travel required.
- (ii) Family emergency.

(B) Before a waiver or extension may be granted, the foster parent should explore the opportunity of receiving training by video or written materials.

(3) The initial preplacement training shall include, but not be limited to, training courses that cover all of the following:

- (A) An overview of the child protective system.
- (B) The effects of child abuse and neglect on child development.
- (C) Positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem.
- (D) Health issues in foster care.
- (E) Accessing education and health services available to foster children.

(F) The right of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

(4) The postplacement annual training shall include, but not be limited to, training courses that cover all of the following:

- (A) Age-appropriate child development.
- (B) Health issues in foster care.
- (C) Positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem.
- (D) Emancipation and independent living skills if a foster parent is caring for youth.



(E) The right of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

(5) Foster parent training may be attained through a variety of sources, including community colleges, counties, hospitals, foster parent associations, the California State Foster Parent Association's Conference, adult schools, and certified foster parent instructors.

(6) A candidate for placement of foster children shall submit a certificate of training to document completion of the training requirements. The certificate shall be submitted with the initial consideration for placements and provided at the time of the annual visit by the licensing agency thereafter.

(c) Nothing in this section shall preclude a county from requiring county-provided preplacement or postplacement foster parent training in excess of the requirements in this section.

SEC. 4. Section 1563 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1563. (a) The director shall ensure that licensing personnel at the department have appropriate training to properly carry out this chapter.

(b) The director shall institute a staff development and training program to develop among departmental staff the knowledge and understanding necessary to successfully carry out this chapter. Specifically, the program shall do all of the following:

(1) Provide staff with 36 hours of training per year that reflects the needs of persons served by community care facilities. This training shall, where appropriate, include specialized instruction in the needs of foster children, persons with mental disorders, or developmental or physical disabilities, or other groups served by specialized community care facilities.

(2) Give priority to applications for employment from persons with experience as care providers to persons served by community care facilities.

(3) Provide new staff with comprehensive training within the first six months of employment. This comprehensive training shall, at a minimum, include the following core areas: administrative action process, client populations, conducting facility visits, cultural awareness, documentation skills, facility operations, human relation skills, interviewing techniques, investigation processes, and regulation administration.



(c) In addition to the requirements in subdivision (b), group home and foster family agency licensing personnel shall receive a minimum of 24 hours of training per year to increase their understanding of children in group homes, certified homes, and foster family homes. The training shall cover, but not be limited to, all of the following topics:

- (1) The types and characteristics of emotionally troubled children.
- (2) The high-risk behaviors they exhibit.
- (3) The biological, psychological, interpersonal, and social contributors to these behaviors.
- (4) The range of management and treatment interventions utilized for these children, including, but not limited to, nonviolent, emergency intervention techniques.
- (5) The right of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

SEC. 5. Section 16001.9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16001.9. (a) It is the policy of the state that all children in foster care shall have the following rights:

- (1) To live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable home where he or she is treated with respect.
- (2) To be free from physical, sexual, emotional, or other abuse, or corporal punishment.
- (3) To receive adequate and healthy food, adequate clothing, and, for youth in group homes, an allowance.
- (4) To receive medical, dental, vision, and mental health services.
- (5) To be free of the administration of medication or chemical substances, unless authorized by a physician.
- (6) To contact family members, unless prohibited by court order, and social workers, attorneys, foster youth advocates and supporters, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and probation officers.
- (7) To visit and contact brothers and sisters, unless prohibited by court order.
- (8) To contact the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services or the State Foster Care Ombudsperson regarding violations of rights, to speak to representatives of these offices confidentially, and to be free from threats or punishment for making complaints.
- (9) To make and receive confidential telephone calls and send and receive unopened mail, unless prohibited by court order.



- (10) To attend religious services and activities of his or her choice.
- (11) To maintain an emancipation bank account and manage personal income, consistent with the child's age and developmental level, unless prohibited by the case plan.
- (12) To not be locked in any room, building, or facility premises, unless placed in a community treatment facility.
- (13) To attend school and participate in extracurricular, cultural, and personal enrichment activities, consistent with the child's age and developmental level.
- (14) To work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate level that is consistent with state law.
- (15) To have social contacts with people outside of the foster care system, such as teachers, church members, mentors, and friends.
- (16) To attend Independent Living Program classes and activities if he or she meets age requirements.
- (17) To attend court hearings and speak to the judge.
- (18) To have storage space for private use.
- (19) To review his or her own case plan if he or she is over 12 years of age and to receive information about his or her out-of-home placement and case plan, including being told of changes to the plan.
- (20) To be free from unreasonable searches of personal belongings.
- (21) To confidentiality of all juvenile court records consistent with existing law.
- (22) To have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.
- (b) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to require a foster care provider to take any action that would impair the health and safety of children in out-of-home placement.

SEC. 6. Section 16003 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16003. (a) In order to promote the successful implementation of the statutory preference for foster care placement with a relative caretaker as set forth in Section 7950 of the Family Code, each community college district with a foster care education program shall make available orientation and training to the relative, or nonrelative extended family member caregiver, into whose care the county has placed a foster child pursuant to Section 1529.2 of the Health and Safety Code, including, but not limited to, courses that cover the following:

- (1) The role, rights, and responsibilities of a relative or nonrelative extended family member caregiver caring for a child in foster care,



including the right of a foster child to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits, and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

- (2) An overview of the child protective system.
- (3) The effects of child abuse and neglect on child development.
- (4) Positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem.
- (5) Health issues in foster care.
- (6) Accessing education and health services that are available to foster children.
- (7) Relationship and safety issues regarding contact with one or both of the birth parents.
- (8) Permanency options for relative or nonrelative extended family member caregivers, including legal guardianship, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program, and kin adoption.
- (9) Information on resources available for those who meet eligibility criteria, including out-of-home care payments, the Medi-Cal program, in-home supportive services, and other similar resources.
- (b) In addition to training made available pursuant to subdivision (a), each community college district with a foster care education program shall make training available to a relative or nonrelative extended family member caregiver that includes, but need not be limited to, courses that cover all of the following:
 - (1) Age-appropriate child development.
 - (2) Health issues in foster care.
 - (3) Positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem.
 - (4) Emancipation and independent living.
 - (5) Accessing education and health services available to foster children.
 - (6) Relationship and safety issues regarding contact with one or both of the birth parents.
 - (7) Permanency options for relative or nonrelative extended family member caregivers, including legal guardianship, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program, and kin adoption.
- (c) In addition to the requirements of subdivisions (a) and (b), each community college district with a foster care education program, in providing the orientation program, shall develop appropriate program parameters in collaboration with the counties.
- (d) Each community college district with a foster care education program shall make every attempt to make the training and orientation



programs for relative or nonrelative extended family member caregivers highly accessible in the communities in which they reside.

(e) When a child is placed with a relative or nonrelative extended family member caregiver, the county shall inform the caregiver of the availability of training and orientation programs and it is the intent of the Legislature that the county shall forward the names and addresses of relative or nonrelative extended family member caregivers to the appropriate community colleges providing the training and orientation programs.

(f) This section shall not be construed to preclude counties from developing or expanding existing training and orientation programs for foster care providers to include relative or nonrelative extended family member caregivers.

SEC. 7. Section 16013 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

16013. (a) It is the policy of this state that all persons engaged in providing care and services to foster children, including, but not limited to, foster parents, adoptive parents, relative caregivers, and other caregivers contracting with a county welfare department, shall have fair and equal access to all available programs, benefits, services, and licensing processes, and shall not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of their clients' or their own actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to create or modify existing preferences for foster placements or to limit the local placement agency's ability to make placement decisions for a child based on the child's best interests.

